

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12
SMS-01 IO-13 OES-09 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
DOTE-00 EB-08 INR-10 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-03 PA-01
ICA-11 /110 W

-----001959 080651Z /20

R 071447Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6430
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
USMISSION USNATO
SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 4403

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, NO, SV, UR
SUBJECT: SOVIET AIR CRASH ON SVALBARD

REF: OSLO 4359 (NOTAL)

1. THE CLEAN-UP WORK ON HOPEN ISLAND CONTINUES, WITH SOVIET
MERCHANT MARINE PERSONNEL GATHERING THE REMAINING DEBRIS.
A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SVALBARD DISTRICT GOVERNOR'S
OFFICE IS PRESENT ON THE ISLAND.

2. IN OSLO, SOVIET AMBASSADOR KIRICHENKO HAS CONTINUED
TO BE A FREQUENT VISITOR TO FONMIN FRYDENLUND'S OFFICE.
ACCORDING TO MFA OFFICIALS, THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IS
INSISTENT THAT THE FLIGHT RECORDER AND THE OTHER PIECES
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OF THE WRECK NOW IN OSLO (SEVERAL INSTRUMENTS AND SOME
METAL PORTIONS OF THE PLANE) BE RETURNED NOW TO THE
USSR. THE SOVIETS OBJECT ESPECIALLY TO ANY THIRD COUNTRY
EXAMINATION OF THE WRECKAGE, SUCH AS THE USUAL NOR-
WEGIAN PROCEDURE OF HAVING THE FLIGHT RECORDER ANALYZED
IN ENGLAND.

3. THE INVESTIGATION COMMISSION, WHOSE MEMBERS BROUGHT BACK THE PORTIONS OF THE WRECK, ARE, ACCORDING TO MFA SOURCES, EQUALLY INSISTENT ON THE NEED FOR ANALYSIS OF THE FLIGHT RECORDER IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THEIR INVESTIGATION OF THE CRASH.

4. THE GON HAS NOT, AS OF THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 7, MADE A DECISION ON THE FLIGHT RECORDER. THE PRESS HAS MADE AN ISSUE OF THE MATTER (REFTEL) TO THE POINT WHERE THE GON, APART FROM THE PURELY OBJECTIVE ASPECTS OF THE SOVIET REQUEST, HAS TO CONSIDER THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL DAMAGE THAT WOULD BE INCURRED BY DEVIATION FROM ITS NORMAL AIR CRASH INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES.

5. COMMENT: THE GON STILL HOPES TO WIND UP THE HOPEN AIR CRASH IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF EFFECTIVE, (IF NOT UNIFORMLY CORDIAL), COOPERATION WITH THE SOVIETS. ALL OF THE OTHER ASPECTS OF THE OPERATION, SUCH AS THE TIMING AND DURATION OF SOVIET PERSONNEL'S ARRIVAL ON HOPEN, AND THE DISPOSITION OF THE BODIES OF THE CREWMEN, WERE WORKED OUT TO THE MUTUAL SATISFACTION OF BOTH PARTIES. THERE DOES NOT, HOWEVER, IN THE MATTER OF THE FLIGHT RECORDER, APPEAR NOW TO BE ANY SOLUTION ACCEPTABLE TO THE SOVIETS THAT WOULD NOT INCUR SEVERE POLITICAL DAMAGE FOR THE LABOR PARTY GOVERNMENT.

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